

NAC Report - Executive Summary

Introduction and Background

The Nurses Advisory Committee was appointed by County Executive Steve Levy in the summer of 2004. By taking this innovative step the County Executive has demonstrated confidence in the unique perspective of the Registered Professional Nurse regarding current and future healthcare challenges in Suffolk County.

There are currently more than 17,000 Registered Professional Nurses in Suffolk County. Registered Professional Nurses are the largest healthcare provider in Suffolk County. According to a Gallup Poll taken in 2004, RN's continue to be the most trusted professional throughout the Country and the public views the Professional Nurse as their advocate when facing healthcare challenges.

Report Focus

Two sub-committees were established, Nursing Shortage and Access to Healthcare for Ethno-cultural Minorities. They reviewed multiple studies and reports from leading agencies regarding the area of concern. The Committees met monthly to discuss various issues related to the nursing shortage and access to care. Discussions centered on the following concerns:

- The Nursing Shortage
- Faculty Shortage
- Clinical Practice Issues
- Leadership
- County Employment of Nurses
- Access and disparities in health care for ethno-cultural minorities

Key reports included:

- New York State Education Department: Registered Nurses in New York State, 2002 Volume I, II, and III.
- Healthcare at the Crossroads: Strategies for Addressing the Evolving Nursing Crisis, Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.
- Health Care's Human Crisis: The American Nursing Shortage, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, April 2002
- Healthy People 2010
- Institute of Medicine Report: Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care, 2003.

Various speakers were invited to meet with the committee and share knowledge, experience and expertise regarding nursing and access to care. Some members of the committee were invited to be roundtable participants for the New York State Senate Higher Education Sub-committee on Nursing Shortages.

The Nurses Advisory Committee is honored to be a valued partner in exploring challenging issues faced by Suffolk County and recommends the following innovative solutions to the County Executive and the community. We look forward to working with the County Executive on the implementation of the recommendations.

Nurses Advisory Committee

Summary of Recommendations

I. Nursing Shortage

- County scholarship funding and loan forgiveness. Tax credits to retain experienced Nursing faculty as part time educators/mentors.
- Suffolk County share masters prepared Nurses for adjunct faculty at area schools of nursing. Partnerships for clinical and educational sites and joint appointments between clinical and academic institutions.
- Establish local data collection system regarding Nursing demographics and trends.
- Develop career ladder for County employed nurses with a salary schedule recognizing experience and education. Provide parity to enhance retention and recruitment. Streamline hiring process.

II. Promotion of Nursing

- Development of a County web site and Pamphlet highlighting Professional Nursing opportunities and resources including faculty positions. Link to national web sites such as Johnson and Johnson.
- Annual workshop sponsored by the County Executive's office for middle school and high school counselors promoting nursing as a career choice. Encourage minority students to consider nursing as a career.
- Nurse Leadership Institute sponsored by the County Executive's office in collaboration with various health organizations to assist in the development of leadership skills and improve understanding of County government and public health policy through nurse internships.

III. Access

- Support development of Nursing Center in underserved area of Suffolk County
- County wide Cultural Competency workshops in collaboration with area academic centers and healthcare organizations
- Active accessing of grants from federal state and private resources to provide for the continuation of successful initiatives.
- Ongoing dissemination of critical information to minority communities regarding access to care, e.g., public service announcements and healthcare alerts

IV. Legislative

- Leadership and Legislative support for important healthcare bills such as: financial support to nursing students and schools, competency and disclosure.
- Support "Advancement of the Profession" for future nurses.
- Support concept of pension portability and retirement health benefits for all RN's

V. To Ensure Success of the chosen initiatives, the Nurses Advisory Committee is recommending;

- Appointment of a "Professional Nurse County Executive Assistant"

